THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Department of Telecom Services permits setting up of two types of call centres (national/international) by various organisations/ companies at some convenient place for providing help to their respective national/internation customers/users. To get access to call centre of a particular organization a customer has to make local/toll free call though the help/service required may be at a distant far off place.

By setting up domestic call centre, an organization can extend services to its customers of different cities connecting them to the call centre through leased lines provided by DTS/MTNL with condition that these leased lines have incoming PSTN connectivity only.

By setting up international call centre, an organization can extend its services to its customers at foreign and connecting them to the international call centre at Indian end through international private leased lines provided by VSNL/STPL. No PSTN connectivity at Indian end is permitted. However, PSTN connectivity at foreign end is permitted.

The procedure for setting up call centres involves an application on plain paper covering details of locations at both ends, network diagram, specifications of equipment used etc., made by the applicant to Deptt. of Telecome Services. This is checked and processed and an approval letter for setting up call centre is issued.

(c) Concessions like no charges for registration & processing, no licence fee & no rental/tariff for setting up of call centers are already in vogue since the policy decision taken by the department in the month of May, 1999.

Opening of Post Offices in Gujarat

†4619. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have fixed any norms for opening the post offices;

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether the post offices in Gujarat have not been set up as per the fixed norms;

(c) whether Government are considering to open some post offices in Gujarat during the current year;

(d) if so, the number thereof alongwith the names of places where such post offices are likely to be opened; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e) The opening of post offices is subject to the proposals, conforming to prescribed norms. Further it depends upon availability of funds and sanctioning of required posts by Ministry of Finance. The targets for opening of new posts offices in Gujarat during the current year are yet to be fixed.

Status of Sankhya Vahini Project

†4620. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of 'Sankhya Vahini' constituted on the basis of agreement between Directorate of Telecommunications and IUNet an American company;

(b) whether global tenders were resorted to for this agreement; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The Joint Venture Agreement proposed to be entered into between Department of Telecom Services and IUNet Inc. is being finalised after taking into consideration all relevant aspects of the project.

(b) and (c) After broad based discussions and consultations, the Information Technology Task Force made the Department of Telecom (now Department of Telecom Services) as the nodal department to work alongwith IUNet of Carnegie Mellon University, USA to establish this project. Thereafter, normal procedures as prescribed for approval of such projects have been followed.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.